

The Guyana Stories: A Pair of Paperbacks

The Tragedy in Print—And Perhaps on TV

By Doti Shirley

The two instant paperbacks about Rev. Jim Jones and the events in Guyana 11 days ago hit the newsstands yesterday.

Bantam's "The Suicide Cult: The Inside Story of the Peoples Temple Sect and the Massacre in Guyana" arrived in Washington first, going on sale at National Airport and several Trover Book Shops early in the afternoon. Berkley's "Guyana Massacre: The Eyewitness Account" appeared in the same stores several hours later.

"The Suicide Cult" was written by San Francisco Chronicle reporters Marshall Kilduff and Ron Javers. "Guyana Massacre" was written by Washington Post reporter Charles A. Krause and editors Laurence Stern and Richard Harwood and other members of The Post staff.

Berley Books president Victor Temkin, who worked at Bantam for 11 years as vice president and general counsel, says his book was delayed three hours by a snowstorm in Dallas, Pa., where the book went to the press late Wednesday.

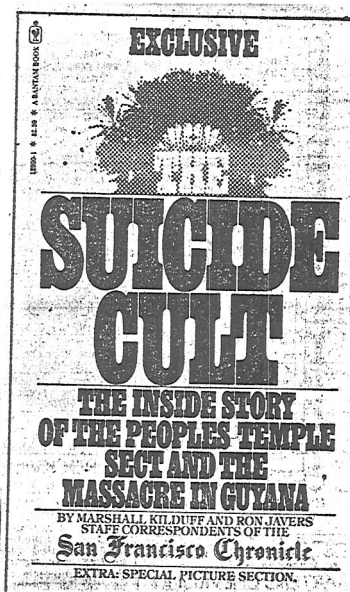
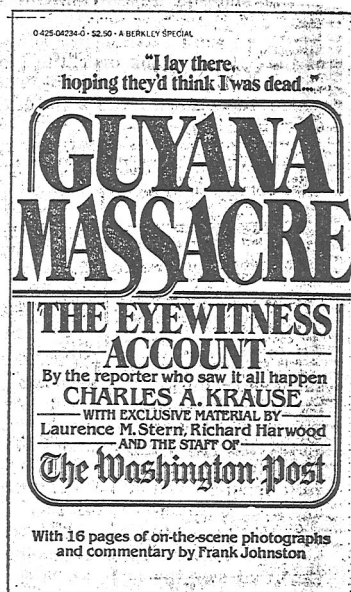
When informed that the Chronicle book had slightly beaten the Post book to the newsstands in Washington, San Francisco Chronicle operations manager Phelps Dewey said, "I'm delighted to hear it." However, Dewey himself still had not seen the Chronicle book. It wasn't out yet in San Francisco.

Meanwhile, negotiations continued in Los Angeles late yesterday for the television rights to "Guyana Massacre." Sources said that one network was close to signing a contract to make a movie out of the story.

Frank Konigsberg, who will produce the movie if the deal is approved, said yesterday he sees the movie as "a dramatic presentation, a docudrama," and he indicated he would not want it to continue over more than one evening.

"Speed is of the essence" in producing the picture, he said, "because of its tremendous topicality. There will be a lot of stories out there taken from the public domain, but it's important that something with legitimacy get out there too."

"Suicide Cult" had sold about 30 copies at National Airport late yesterday afternoon, but an official at the airport said "Guyana Massacre" had not been on sale long enough to do much business. At one Trover shop, however, three copies of "Guyana Massacre" had been sold, and none of



the "Suicide Cult" copies had been picked up.

The 210-page "Guyana Massacre" was written at the Madison Hotel. Observed Temkin: "They've (the Israelis

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PAPERBACKS, From C1

and Egyptians) been negotiating a peace treaty at the Madison for so long now without results, and we wrote a book there in two days. I don't know what took them so long."

Javers, the Chronicle reporter who was wounded in the initial gunfire at Port Kaituma, Guyana, is also staying at the Madison this week. He was treated for his wounds at Andrews Air Force Base and dictated his part of the 201-page book over the phone from Andrews to San Francisco, where Kilduff and the rest of the Chronicle book team were working. Javers is expected to stay in the area for two weeks, said Dewey, while an infection from his wound is treated at Andrews.

A Bantam official said "there is an awful lot of interest" in screen rights to the Chronicle book, but at least two officials at ABC and NBC have rejected proposals for Jonestown movies.

ABC received "a couple of dozen" submissions on the subject, said Leonard Hill, the network's movies-for-TV vice president, and "there may well be an excellent movie there. But to find it will take time. To treat it in a slapdash manner would be exploitative and irresponsible."

Hill said the ideas presented to him included one "pro-Jones" point of view that saw the man as "a sympathetic tragic figure who tried to ad-

vance social justice but was caught up in cancer and mind-altering drugs and then humiliation when the people at the airstrip were killed without his permission."

"That would take a lot of substantiation," said Hill.

After the Israeli victory at Entebbe in 1976, ABC and NBC raced to dramatize the event. But that was "a wonderfully heroic victory," said Hill. "This is more complex." Hill said ABC's Entebbe movie suffered because of the rush.

Hill suspects that the Jones story may be in Indiana or in Ukiah, Calif.—earlier haunts of Jones—rather than Guyana, "but that will take a lot of research."

"We may be doing the wrong thing," said Hill. "This may be a decision my associates will lament if CBS comes on with a 65 share for Guyana. But I have asked for no more submissions."

"I wouldn't touch it with a 10-foot pole," said Deanne Barkley, NBC's movies-for-TV boss. "Obviously there is some story in a man who could turn 900 people into lemmings. There are at least 900 stories. But it will be a long time before the story sifts down."

The story Barkley has in mind may take a long time to sift down, but that won't stop Bantam or Berkley. Sifting down into the country over the next few days will be at least 500,000 copies of "Guyana Massacre" and at least 350,000 copies of "Suicide Cult."